## DO'S and DON'TS for IEP Teams - Perspectives for Schools to Consider

 DO remember that parents didn't "choose" to have a child with a disability and they want their student to be successful.

**DON'T** assume that parents aren't willing to consider what is needed to help a student be successful from the school's perspective. Sometimes parents may need information or assistance in finding what will work for a student. This does not mean that they don't have the student's best interest at heart.

DO recognize that parents and teachers may sometimes see a student/situation differently.

**DON'T** assume that one is right and the other wrong – we each see the child from our own perspective.

Both perspectives give us a picture of the child and help us understand how the child responds in different situations.

• **DO** approach meetings with an attitude of cooperation and collaboration.

**DON'T** assume that the parent is the "enemy" and that you will get farther if you go in fighting. Our students/children often have complicated issues. It will take both of us <u>working together</u> to find positive solutions.

 DO recognize that parents often have the legal right and responsibility to give input on their child's goal and to help determine how a specific goal will be met.

**DON'T** assume that there is only one way to accomplish a goal for a student.

Parents look to you for your suggestions based on your unique expertise, but they are the expert on their child. Seek to understand what they know about their child that no one else does so that the team can make the most appropriate decisions.

their child that no one else does so that the team can make the most appropriate decisions.

DO recognize that parents sometimes feel attacked before they have even had a chance to resolve a
situation. It is only fair to approach parents with an open mind. Both parties need to LISTEN FIRST
to hear the other's perspective.

**DON'T** assume (especially if you have had a bad experience with a parent) that you will have the same experience with every parent. If you feel that you have hit a roadblock, utilize resources outside the school and encourage parents to seek support from an outside resource. There are good community based organizations that can help parents who find themselves in a difficult situation. Also, many districts have parent support people and/or staff at the district office who can facilitate meetings between parents and schools.



- DO help parents determine what is right for their specific child. Recognize that a parent's most important "agenda" is to address the individual, unique needs of their child. What worked (or didn't work) for a child with the same disability classification may be very appropriate (or inappropriate) for another. Schools and parents must be open to all options.
- **DO** use "I" messages to communicate your needs and especially your frustrations.
  - **DON'T** accuse and blame. Parents are people first. It they are accused or blamed, they will get defensive. Defensive people will not get very far in solving problems.
- DO express appreciation to our student's parents. Parents need positive reinforcement (just like kids and teachers).
  - **DON'T** assume that parents don't understand the unique challenges of working with their child and meeting their needs. Recognize how difficult it can be to be a parent of a student with a disability 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Tell them that you appreciate their efforts on behalf of their child.
- DO remember that parents have lives too. It may not be reasonable
   (or possible) to expect them to come to school during the school
   day or to attend a lengthy IEP meetings over and over again.
   This doesn't mean that they don't care about their child.
  - **DON'T** hesitate to remind parents that as a teacher or school professional who is often a parent yourself, you are juggling a lot
    - "on your plate" too. Sometimes parents forget how difficult it can be to be a special education teacher or administrator and that you often feel overwhelmed by paperwork and increasing demands. But also remember that parents see you as skilled professionals whose job it is to serve their student and meet the needs of their child.
- DO remember that we are all here for the same purpose...we want the most appropriate education for each child. We may not always agree on everything, but the BEST programs are those in which parents and schools work together in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

WE NEED TO WORK AT IT TOGETHER!



